

RACIAL CAPITALISM: FROM BRITISH COLONIALISM TO THE SETTLER COLONIAL APARTHEID STATE

Nahla Abdo¹

Chancellor's Professor of Sociology,
Carleton University,
Ottawa, Canada

ABSTRACT

This article explores the development of capitalism in Palestine under British colonialism and the Zionist settler colonial project. It examines first, Israel's internal and external capitalist dynamism, including its treatment of its non-European citizens, namely indigenous Palestinians, and non-Ashkenazi (Arab) Jewish settlers. Second, it explores the state's interdependent relationship with Western, especially US imperialism. The article argues that the British colonial state was crucial in enabling the Zionist project to materialize, leading to weakening the socio-economic fabric of the Palestinians in their own lands and homeland, creating a favourable condition for the Zionist project to gradually penetrate the land of Palestine and dispossess its population. As a European (Jewish) settler colonial movement, Zionism, founded on racism and racialization, aimed at establishing a new Jewish enclave separate and independent from the indigenous Palestinians. This separateness made it resemble apartheid South Africa, yet the historical specificity of Palestine, where the Zionist settlers did not just alienate, exclude and when needed, use and exploit the Palestinians, but also expelled the indigenous Palestinians and claim Palestine as a 'pure' Jewish state.

1 Nahla Abdo is an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist feminist activist, Chancellor's Professor of Sociology at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Among her books: *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (co-edited 2018); *Captive Revolution: Palestinian Women's Anti-Colonial Struggle within the Israeli Prison System* (2014, in French, 2019); *Women in Israel: Race, Gender, and Citizenship* (2011); *Gender, Citizenship, and the State: The Israeli Case* (2010 Arabic); *Women and Poverty in the OPT: Some Conceptual and Methodological Notes*, (2007); *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges*, (co-edited 2004) and *Women and the Politics of Military Confrontation: Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation* (co-edited 2002). She is currently working on research comparing indigenous women's conditions in settler-colonial Israel and Canada.



KEYWORDS: British colonialism, US Imperialism, taxation, fallaheen, settler colonialism, capitalism

Introduction: Settler Colonial Racial Capitalism in Palestine

Race, racism and racialisation constitute the essence of capitalism. Racialisation accompanies capitalism in all its forms and stages of development, including colonialism and imperialism. By capitalism, I refer to industrial capitalism or the market system which involves the privatisation and commodification of labour and capital. Upon its contact with pre-capitalist formations, capital aims to turn the former into a source of labour power and capital for its accumulation and further expansion. Capitalism is not confined to its internal dynamism of labour exploitation. Its expansion in the form of colonialism and imperialism is possible only through racial exploitation of the peoples of the Global South or pre-capitalist formations. This article examines first, Israel's internal and external capitalist dynamism, including its policies and treatment of its non-European citizens, namely indigenous Palestinians, and non-Ashkenazi (Arab) Jewish settlers. Second, it explores the state's interdependent relationship with Western, especially US imperialism.

In his so-called 'primitive accumulation', Marx(1867, 875) explains the initial stages of capitalist development through its encroachment into 'virgin lands', or pre-capitalist formations where land was being used by its inhabitants as the primary means of production and reproduction. Pre-capitalist economies are natural economies, where labour power is related to the land in customary or traditional ways, and where land and labour power are not alienated from each other. To rupture such an inalienable relation, a process of privatisation and commodification of land and labour power must exist. Hence the role of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism in destroying such a relationship through the expropriation of the direct producers from the land and the consequent commodification/privatisation of the land. This process, Marx insists, is possible only by using force, violence, and extra-judicial means by the capitalist-colonial state. This article outlines the central role played by the British colonial policing and taxation policies in rupturing the social relationship between Palestinians and their land.

The near-total expropriation of the peasants from the land begins the process of commodification and privatisation of both land and labour power, ushering in the beginning of the capitalist development that expands and reproduces itself through the exploitation of the native labour power it coerces into its service. Exploitation is explained in terms of the production of surplus labour power invested in the production process,

which in turn turns into surplus labour and commodities exchanged for surplus value or profit. But this process remained confined to the internal British capitalist development.

While various Marxists accept Marx's definition of the internal dynamics of 'primitive accumulation' (Luxemburg 1913; Harvey 2010), especially in terms of the role the state employed in the process, they contend that capitalism does not stop at the internal or national level, but rather continues its development by encroaching into 'foreign' lands, through colonialism and imperialism.

Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913) deals with capitalist production and relations at two levels. The first is by re-examining the internal dynamics of capitalist production and re-evaluating Marx's notion of simple reproduction and 'reproduction on an expanded scale' (in Abdo 1996, 303). Luxemburg accepts Marx's notion of 'primitive accumulation', especially its emphasis on the need for state violence, including its legal (e.g., taxation and police force) and extra-legal (e.g., impoverishment, starvation) aspects in 'freeing' labour power from its natural relations to the land and coercing it into wage labour. Luxemburg differs from Marx in arguing that the process of depriving indigenous populations of their only means of production and reproduction is ongoing. She uses the concepts of colonialism and imperialism to demonstrate the Western capitalist encroachment into the Global South, employing the examples of the extermination of the indigenous populations by the North American settler-colonial states and the Algerian population by the French capitalist colonial power.

Marx's statement that 'capitalism comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt' (Marx 1867: 875) expresses the violence used by the capitalist state, including the promulgation of its 'enclosures', a policy of privatisation, forcing the further expropriation of native agricultural direct producers. After the seventeenth century, British capitalism began to encroach into 'foreign' places in the 'third world', including the Caribbean, as it sought the extraction of sugar cane and tobacco, using servitude and slavery (Castello 2020).

Capitalist encroachment onto peasant societies or societies with natural economies, Luxemburg explains, aims at gaining immediate possession of important sources of productive forces such as land and game, at 'liberating' labour power and coercing it into service, introducing a commodity economy, and separating trade and agriculture (Luxemburg 1913). These aims characterise all colonial conquests though they are historically specific. Luxemburg's analysis of colonialism is evident in the Palestinian case, where British colonial rule was accompanied by the European Zionist settler colonial project. Here we witness the expropriation of the Palestinian peasants from the land, the separation of

trade from agriculture, or more accurately the destruction of the agrarian industry, such as the olive oil soap manufacturing. While European Zionist access to Palestine's land was relatively slow due to the strong Palestinian resistance, the question of utilising 'freed' Palestinian labour power was more complex as outlined later.

Despite being somewhat different, colonialism and settler colonialism use similar methods in further extracting and accumulating capital. In Palestine, the Zionist settler colonial project, which aimed to establish a 'pure' Jewish economy and state in Palestine, alienated the agricultural producers from the land and denied them access to the labour market. From the outset, the flagrant exclusivism characterising the Zionist racial colonisation of Palestine succeeded in establishing an apartheid state where Palestinians were pushed out of the developing capitalist European Zionist economy.

The Zionist form of apartheid differs drastically from Apartheid South Africa. In comparing the South African and Israeli Apartheid systems, South African revolutionary officials, including Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu and politician Ronnie Kasrils argued that Israeli apartheid is the more brutal one. According to Kasrils (2015), unlike Apartheid South Africa, which oppressed the indigenous South African Blacks, confined them to Bantustans and used them as a source of cheap labour-power, both the pre-1948 Zionist colony and the Israeli state aimed at getting rid of the indigenous Palestinians and turning the country into a purely Jewish racial state. Kasrils—whose grandparents were Jewish immigrants to South Africa from Latvia and Lithuania—warns against seeing Zionism as a national liberation movement for the Jewish people, on a par with the PLO, 'in an attempt to create a false balance between the two movements' (Abdo 2017: 125–138).

Apartheid South Africa required the indigenous Blacks to live, albeit in poor conditions, to enable their exploitation and further racial capitalist development. In the Palestinian case, it is not the lives, but the absence, the figurative and practical 'death' or disappearance of the indigenous population that has been sought. Genocide, which in 1948 resulted in the Nakba, has continued unabated, using various means to further develop Zionist European racial capital. The current Gaza genocide, witnessed by the world, is but a continuation of the process of settler colonialism and its concomitant genocide, which is why we need to further explore Patrick Wolfe's (2016) and other settler colonial scholars' theorisation of settler colonialism. In this context, settler colonialism and genocide are explained not as historical events but rather as systems or structures that perpetuate the erasure and destruction of native peoples as a precondition for settler colonialism and the expropriation of lands and resources.

This article intersects Marxist theories of ‘primitive accumulation’ with the colonial/imperial aims of British and Zionist racial capitalism, leading to the establishment of the Zionist settler colonial state and its aim of driving the indigenous Palestinians out of their land. The concept genocide used here follows Raphael Lemkin’s definition, implemented in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Lemkin 1944; UNCG 1948). Elsewhere, based on Lemkin’s theorisation of genocide (Abdo and Masalha 2018), I used Lemkin’s definition of genocide as a ‘coordinated plan aimed at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national, ethnical or religious groups so that these groups wither and die like plants that have suffered a blight. The end may be accomplished by the forced disintegration of the political and social institutions, of the culture of the people, of their language, their national feelings and their religion. It may be accomplished by wiping out all bases of personal security, liberty, health and dignity. . . Genocide is directed against a national group as an entity. . .’ (Abdo 2018: 59).

Historicising Racial Capitalism, Colonialism and Genocide in Palestine

The terms colonialism and imperialism as used in this article refer to the political/ideological character of the ethnic/national/racial bases of discrimination, oppression, and segregation, in addition to the economic exploitation and appropriation upon which capitalism is based. European-Zionist settler colonial encroachment in Palestine started in the late nineteenth century with the establishment of the Jewish settlements of Rishon LeZion, Rosh Pinna and Zikhron Ya’akov. Financed largely by Baron de-Rothchild, these were private for-profit agricultural settlements, built on bought and stolen Palestinian land and used Palestinian labour power (Abdo 2011).

The intention to establish Zionist settlements in Palestine started before British colonialism took over Palestine. In 1917 the British issued the Balfour Declaration, laying the foundation for the European Jewish settler colonial project in Palestine, and the British ‘generosity’ towards the Jewish settlers was expressed in actualising the process of land transfer through legal and extra-legal means as discussed in the following section.

To understand how the Zionist racial colonial project materialised in Palestine, I outline a brief history of Palestine’s economy between the 1920s and 1948. Palestinians, who accounted for about 1.5 million people, were overwhelmingly agricultural direct producers. In my account of the development of European (Jewish) capitalism in Palestine with the full support of the British colonial government (Abdo 1984) I argue that had

it not been for European (primarily British) imperialism, Israel would not have existed.

After the imperialist First World War, Britain and France divided West Asia (also known as 'the Middle East'), especially Greater Syria (Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine), into smaller separate units, erected borders between them and closed them off from each other. This division changed practices of land cultivation, ownership, and possession. Certain tracts of land, for example in Marj Ibn-Amer, previously owned mainly by Lebanese capitalist landlords, were bought by Zionist capitalists, resulting in the forced expropriation of the peasants who lived on these lands. But this was not the norm. A larger land transfer happened because of the impoverishment of the Palestinians, largely caused by British colonial rule. As the Hope Simpson Report (1930) attests, by the 1930s, Palestinian peasants became deeply impoverished due to the excessive British taxation system that broke the bones of the agricultural direct producers.

During British colonial rule, most Palestinians were agricultural direct producers, producing and reproducing themselves in a traditional pre-capitalist system, in the almost total absence of private property. In such a system land was inalienable, used by the peasants from one generation to the next. To pay for its colonial endeavour, the British Mandate regime imposed heavy taxation on land registration. However, considering most of the peasants had not dealt with capital or cash before, they failed to make the payments. Failure to register their land resulted in many Palestinian peasants being forced to pawn or sell their land to the state, which in turn auctioned the lands to the highest bidders who were often European Zionist Jews. Several Zionist theorists praised the positive character of the 'Jewish capital' in Palestine, claiming it developed the economy and provided employment to the unemployed Palestinians (ArnonOhana1978). Others, like Simcha Flapan, argued that 'what emerged... between 1917 and 1948... was not the exploitation of one sector by another, but... a competition between the separate national economies, each growing rapidly... accompanied by a crisis of modernisation in the Arab sector' (Flapan 1979).

These orientalist and racist perspectives lack materiality and ignore the role of the European Zionist capitalist economy, as a colonial settler project aimed at establishing racial capitalism throughout Palestine, enabled only through the expropriation of the Palestinian agricultural direct producers. In fact, for about 600 years, until the early twentieth century, the Palestinian economy was ruled by the brutal Ottoman Empire. In the late nineteenth century, with the beginning of the collapse of the Empire, the Ottoman Sultan began to sell 'state lands' to foreign investors, who originated from Lebanon and Syria where capitalism was more developed, but also to European Jewish settlers, especially to Baron de-Rothchild

(Antonius 1939). It is important to note here that there is no such thing as 'state land'. The land originally and traditionally belongs to its cultivator, its producer, the peasant, and the serf. Lands become the property of the state only when capitalist, colonial and imperial power is imposed on a colonised land. These lands became 'state lands' only after 1876 and the introduction of the Ottoman Land Code which resulted in the transfer of various tracts of land to the state, hence the creation of the category of 'state lands'. These 'state lands' were later inherited by the British colonial state and were partly or wholly transferred or sold to the capitalist European (Jewish) settlers.

The maritime plains, Palestine's most fertile tracts of land, producing Palestine's well-known Jaffa oranges, Himadeh(1938) asserts, 'were appropriated by Rothchild or his association known as the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association founded by Baron Maurice Hirsch. Between 1882 and 1912 'Baron de Rothchild had invested more than 15 million English pounds in the development of citrus plantations' by confiscating several adjacent tracts of land, bringing them together and turning them into big citrus plantations (Mandel 1976: 32). It is important to note that before World War I, 'Palestine exported a yearly average of 1.5 million cases of oranges to Europe' (Himadeh 1938: 139).

Though Palestine was still an agrarian social structure, it also developed small industries in major cities, such as oranges in Yafa and olive oil soap in Nablus. These agrarian-based industries were dealt a severe blow with the introduction of the capitalist European colonial settlement in Palestine. Palestinian family-based labour in citrus production in Yafa suffered from the competition imposed by the Zionist citrus plantations which used cheap Palestinian labour-power. Similarly, the local olive oil and soap industry, manufactured in Nablus and based on family labour, was crushed with the introduction of capitalist-produced soap in the Shemen factory in Haifa (Himadeh 1938). This so-called competition, discussed by Israeli historians as if both economies had co-existed side by side forever, is the result of what Luxemburg referred to as the introduction of a commodity economy, and the separation of trade and agriculture. These are just some of the features of racial capitalism performed through European British and Zionist colonialism and imperialism, killing off the local traditional industry.

It was the appropriation of Palestinian lands and the consequent expropriation of the *fallaheen* that constituted the most important force in the creation of the Zionist settler colonial enclave, assisted substantially by the British Empire. By the early 1920s, Palestinian *fallaheen* were heavily indebted, partly through borrowing from landowners, paying high-interest rates, and partly through the fact that the Ottoman tithe would be paid to them in kind (in produce).

Despite this, Palestinian agricultural direct producers remained on the land and they were not expelled or expropriated by the Ottomans, yet this was drastically altered under British colonialism. Under the British Mandate for Palestine (1916–1948), which the British Empire used to camouflage its colonial rule over Palestine, Britain agreed to ‘see to it that it will place the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home’ (Hope Simpson 1930, emphasis added). Article 4 of the Mandate document stated that ‘an appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognised as a public body to advise and co-operate with the Administration of Palestine ...’ This body was the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which the colonial government encouraged and helped by transferring to it Palestinian lands including state lands and waste or *Mushaa’* lands (agricultural common lands owned jointly by the community and loosely taxed, as defined in the Land Code of 1858) (Hope Simpson 1930). It is worth noting that *Mushaa’* lands controlled/owned by the state, though not tilled, or cultivated in the traditional sense, were not wastelands, but were considered as such by European racial capital. These lands were used by the *fallaheen* for grazing and for gathering the wild edible vegetables and medicinal plants, such as *Za’atar* (thyme), *Ilet* (dandelion), *khubbaizeh* (hibiscus) and *sileq* (chard) to supplement their diet. The *Mushaa’* (*al-Barriyyeh*) is also the place where women would pick herbs such as *Baboonej* (camomile), *Mairamiyyeh* (sage), *shoumar* (Anis) and *Hasal-Ban* (Rosemary). It is no surprise that Gaza Palestinians denied food and a proper diet, resort to gathering ‘waste’ or wild edible vegetables like the ones mentioned above.

The British colonial state’s appropriation of the *Mushaa’* land was transferred to the Zionist Agency and the prevention of the indigenous people’s access to these lands was added to the state’s heavy taxation. The 1920 British Land Law ushered in land privatisation in Palestine for the first time. Under this law, each parcel of land had to be registered and a specific fee had to be paid. This was in addition to the heavy tax stipulated in the 1924 Rural Property Tax at 15 percent of the gross annual product that the *fallaheen* had to pay (Survey of Palestine II, 1945–46 [1991]). Many families failed to pay ending up pawning their land to usurers or leaving it altogether and moving elsewhere for wage labour. Meanwhile, the Zionist plantations were excused from paying taxes.

The European Zionist settler project in Palestine experienced significant growth under British colonialism as the settler population grew from 55,000 in 1918, to 83,790 or 11.1 percent in 1922, to 149,500 in 1934 and 554,329 or 30.6 per cent of the total population of Palestine in 1948 (Survey of Palestine, Vol. II, 1945–6 [1991], 779). At the same time, the European Jewish capital invested in appropriating Palestinian lands, and the Zionist owned lands grew from 594,000 dunums or 9.1 percent

in 1922 to 903,000 or 13.8 percent, to 1,392,600 in 1936 and 1,604,800 or 24.5 percent in 1941 (Abdo 1984, 98). According to the 1945 [1991] Survey of Palestine, compared to 1920–30, when 14 percent of Zionist controlled lands came from the colonial state, in the next decade, 1930–40, 48 percent of the land owned by the Zionists was British ‘state land’ (Abdo 1984, 98). Land confiscation and the resultant expropriation of the peasants aggravated the situation. By 1929, ‘29.4 percent of the total peasant families were expropriated as a result of the Zionist settlement’ (Hope Simpson, 1930). Palestine’s peasants were poverty stricken as result of Zionist capitalism (Abdo 1984).

Zionist settler colonialism, with full British support, chose the most fertile and productive lands in Palestine, the coastal plains with their famous citrus crops and the Marj area, part of the Galilee, with its olive orchards. For economic reasons, the Zionist settlers refused to settle in areas like *al-Muthallath* (the Triangle) and *al-Naqab*, described as cultivable but requiring more water. After the establishment of the state of Israel all remaining Palestinian lands were targeted by Israel’s settler colonialism.

Furthermore, Zionist racial colonial capitalism materialised through exclusionary Judaised land and Hebrew-Jewish Labour. This policy was promulgated by the Zionist Agency, later the Jewish Agency, that stipulated that ‘all land appropriated by or through the Zionist agency should ... be considered as the inalienable property of the Jewish people’ (Abdo 1984, 87–8), and that no non-Jewish (meaning Palestinian) labour power could be employed on Palestinian land appropriated by the Zionist Agency. This related to agricultural and industrial labour alike (Abdo 2011). This racial segregation in employment continued until the mid-1960s. Employing only Jewish labour, however, does not mean forfeiting profits from cheap Palestinian labour because the Zionist movement always needed a reservoir of cheap Jewish labour imported from Yemen and other Arab countries.

The Zionist colonial project was not about ‘safeguarding the Jews of the world’, despite its continuous attempt at hijacking Judaism and equating it with Zionism, but was rather part of the imperialist project in the Middle East. The current student uprisings worldwide against the Israeli genocide have substantial Jewish participation along with various other Jewish organisations that denounce Zionism and the Zionist state, demonstrate that this equation between Judaism and Zionism is false.

As part of European imperialism, the Zionists joined the British army and Zionist militias (e.g., *Lehi*, *Etzel*, *Stern*, *Irgun*, and *Hagana*) conducted terror campaigns against the Palestinians, aiming at expelling and replacing them. These militias became the foundation of Israel’s army. Between the 1930s and the 1940s, especially after the effective Palestinian anti-colonial revolution (1936–39), several Zionist terrorist militias began to

target Palestinians, destroying homes and villages and executing men in many villages. By 1947–8 the Zionist terror campaign resulted in the expulsion of about 75 percent of Palestine's population. The European Zionist state was indeed built on the blood and disappearance of the indigenous Palestinians.

As with all imperialist colonialism, anti-colonial resistance by the Palestinians was present well before 1948. It peaked in the 1930s, with the six-month general strike which disrupted the British economy, and a three-year guerilla revolution, 1936–39, resulting in the 1939 White Paper that intended to halt Zionist settlements (Khalaf 1991). The Zionist militias escalated their massacres, importing arms from various Western countries, until the establishment of the Zionist racial state.

Though the term *fellaheen* has been used in a non-gendered manner, Palestinian women played a vital role in the production and reproduction processes. Women partook in tilling and cultivating the land and gathering citrus fruits and olives. They utilised the Mushaa' lands to supplement their families' subsistence, and they involved in chicken farming, grazing, and making *jibneh* (cheese) and *labneh* (strained yogurt). For Palestinian *fallahat* (female peasants) the home and the public space were one, with no separation between the two as under capitalism. Peasant women's presence in public and their familiarity with the land were a factor in the role women played in the resistance. In some sense, Palestinian women in pre-capitalist Palestine, despite poverty and hardships, were freer than under racial capitalism.

Israel: A Jewish 'National' Home or an Imperialist Basis in West Asia?

Created by the British, shored up, maintained, reproduced, and heavily militarised by the West, especially US imperialism, Israel or the Jewish entity continues to function as a bastion for Western imperialism in the Middle East.

From the outset, the Zionist project implemented a two-pronged method of control. The first aimed at making space for Jewish settlements and settlers, by controlling the land/geography and the people/demography. During its early years, the Zionist state started encroaching into Arab countries to bring in settlers, often by force (Shohat 2002). The second was expressed in the state establishing itself as a power in the service of imperialism, while simultaneously using Zionist Hasbara/propaganda to construct narratives of victimhood, the Holocaust and antisemitism to justify its colonial imperialist project and stave off any criticism. Both processes were enacted by force, violence,

wars, and racialisation, creating the duality of victim (Israel) versus terrorist (Palestinians).

Watching the current Israeli genocide in Gaza, we can observe the continuation of the vicious cycle of destruction, killing and erasure of the Palestinians, which began before and during the Nakba and continues to this day. Confining the Nakba to 1948 does not convey the Palestinian reality, particularly if we recall the list of massacres committed by the Zionists between 1937 and 1948. Except for Benny Morris's (2001, 406) estimated number of Palestinians killed in 1948 at 12,000, no data on the number of Palestinians killed by British and Zionist forces in the process of colonialism is available. Adding this to the scores of massacres and the destruction of infrastructure, homes and personnel and the intention to commit such atrocities are all parts of Raphael Lemkin's definition of Genocide (Abdo 2018: 58–60).

In most of the 500 plus villages, towns and cities destroyed during and after the Nakba, massacres were used as a means of scaring the inhabitants and forcing them to leave their homes. The Palestinians who remained in the interior were confined to three separate areas: the Galilee, the *Muthallath* (Triangle) and the *Naqab*. Between 1948 and 1966, the whole Palestinian community was placed under a military governorate during which Palestinians were not granted free movement. Permits from the Military Governor, which were not easy to acquire, were necessary for any move. As a child accompanying my father to get a permit to visit my mother's family in Haifa, I experienced the intimidation Palestinians continue to go through in the territories occupied in 1967, when they cannot move without a permit from the military or the Civil Administration.

Moreover, as Sabri Jiryis (1968) contends, during the military governorate or 'emergency' period Israel placed large tracts of land under emergency military rule, preventing their Palestinian owners from accessing them. Moreover, in 1950 Israel introduced the Absentees' Property Law intent on confiscating more lands owned by Palestinians who were present in Palestine but absent from their homes on the day of the population survey. In addition to the land it appropriated directly from the Palestinians, Israel, as a colonial state, like its predecessors, inherited the *Mushaa'* and other lands, expanding its territory further. During the military governorate, Israel crushed all attempts at resistance. It banned *Harakat Al-Ard* (The Land Movement), imprisoned its leadership, and terrorised and silenced the population. On 30 March 1976, Israel killed six Palestinian citizens, including one woman, during protests against its confiscation of Palestinian lands, on what became known as *Yom Al Ard* (Land Day). Not unlike other racial colonies, the Zionist state used pseudo-legal and extra-legal means to rob more lands and

properties belonging to the indigenous people in its process of capitalist accumulation. Land theft, robbing individual property and confiscating people's homes and belongings began with the very birth of the state. Israeli historian Adam Raz documents the extent of the looting of Palestinian property by the Israelis during the 1948 Nakba, citing Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion saying: 'Most of the Jews are thieves' (Raz 2020).

Racial capitalism embedded in colonial imperial projects is about wars, robbery and looting. Israel's imperialist ambitions did not stop with the Nakba. In 1956, allied with the imperialist powers of Britain and France, Israel waged war against Egypt to control the Suez Canal, but the attempt was halted by US intervention. Looting homes and public and private property accompanied all of Israel's imperialist wars, including the 1967 war and the current Gaza genocidal war. As outlined by Felicity Arbuthnot: 'Israel is set to become a major exporter of gas and some oil, if all goes to plan' (Arbuthnot 2013). In the current context, it has been observed that Israel's 'all goes to plan' option consists of bypassing Palestine and 'wiping Gaza off the map', as well confiscating all of Gaza's maritime offshore gas reserves, worth billions of dollars (Chossudovsky 2024).

Unable to maintain its internal military rule, and wage a war against the neighbouring Arab states, Israel ended the military governorate, and in 1967 launched another US-aided imperialist war against neighbouring Arab countries, occupying the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Sinai, parts of Southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights. In flagrant defiance of international law and UN resolutions, Israel expanded Jewish settlements, annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and perhaps more importantly, managed to build new and strong strategic geopolitical (army) bases for its future imperialist interests in the region. Such actions which involve expansion of territories and building military bases on occupied lands are part of Israel's racial colonial hegemony in West Asia.

Israel's imperialist racialisation of Arabs involves not only indigenous Palestinians but also non-Western Arab Jewish settlers. From the outset, the Zionist movement concealed its true intentions, by highlighting its national religious programme, referred to as 'building a national home for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust', disregarding the lives of indigenous Palestinians who were displaced and replaced by Jews. As part of encouraging Jews from anywhere in the world to settle in Palestine, the large communities of Arab Jews (racialised as *Mizrahim* or 'oriental' Jews) in Arab and North African countries became Zionism's first target. Zionism used various means to terrorise these communities, pressuring them to leave and migrate to the state (Abdo 2011; Shohat, 2002). During the 1970s and 1980s, these ethnically diverse communities made up most of the immigrants to Israel. These Arab Jews were

initially not Zionist and were treated even worse than the indigenous Palestinians (Abdo 2011). Upon arrival, most Arab-*Mizrahi* Jews were sent to *maabarout* (transit camps) for several years, then moved to *ayarotpitouach*, or peripheral underdeveloped 'development towns'. While the men of these communities were recruited to the army, the women worked as cheap domestic and industrial labour.

Oppressed, discriminated against, and living in poverty and poor health with a high rate of unemployment, these communities suffered total isolation for many years. However, economic depravity was only one aspect of their lives. Though Israel was interested in White European Jewish settlers, the dwindling numbers of such settlers made the state recruit non-European Jews with the intention of Zionising them. To Zionise these populations, whose only common denominator with Ashkenazi Jews was the Jewish religion, Israel deprived *Mizrahi* Jews of their language and culture and forced them to adopt the Ashkenazi (European) Zionist way of life (Shohat 2002; Abdo 2011). The Zionist project in Palestine not only intended to create a Jewish state, but it also attempted, albeit with little success, to equate Judaism (the religion) with Zionism (the ideological/political project). This equation was challenged and rejected by many *Mizrahim*, especially feminists, who argued that Zionism never existed in their original (Arab) countries (Shohat 2002).

The racial settler colonial state established control over the stolen land of Palestine by expelling the indigenous people, while those not expelled face different forms of extremely violent elimination in the service of settler colonial racial capital. Within the Zionist/Israeli context, the case of the Yemeni Jews serves as an example. When they arrived in the early 1950s, the Yemenis, like other *Mizrahi*-Arab Jews, were placed in transit camps 'where poor hygiene, insufficient food, and disease explained why many children required medical treatment' (Lentin 2018: 81). They were orientalist, racialised, and discriminated against and used as cheap labour-power (Ben DorBenite forthcoming). Ronit Lentin (2018) provides a detailed analysis of this phenomenon, explaining the role of Dr Chaim Sheba, who was in charge of conducting a massive programme of 'unnecessary medical treatments, at enormous expense, which killed many of the victims'. It was estimated that about 100,000 Jewish and Palestinian children were irradiated, with grave side effects such as cancer, epilepsy, infertility and brain disorders (Lentin 2018: 80).

Ethiopian Jews did not fare any better. Although large numbers of them were brought in by the Zionist arm of *Hapoel Hatsaier* (the young worker) to do cheap agricultural work and replace the indigenous Palestinians, the Ethiopians were intimidated, harassed, and discriminated against, due to their dark skin colour. During their journey to Israel while in absorption centres operated by Israelis and even after becoming Israelis, Ethiopian

women were given the Depo Provera contraceptive without their consent (Greenwood 2013). Upon arrival, Ethiopians were often asked to change their names to become 'Israelis'. In the mid-1970s, at the order of Prime Minister Begin, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel required them to undergo *pro forma* Jewish conversion, to remove any doubt as to their Jewish status. Finally, 'on January 24, 1996, the *Ma'ariv* newspaper revealed Israel's main bloodbank policy that drew heavy criticism in Israel and worldwide. According to the policy... blood donations received from Ethiopian immigrants and their offspring were secretly disposed of' (*The Washington Post* 1996).

By Way of Conclusion

Racial capitalism inherent in Western colonial imperialism managed to create a Zionist entity based on exclusion and exclusivism in Palestine. Initiated by British imperialism and shored up by US imperialism, this entity became the West's major strategic military and geopolitical base in the area. Israel's crucial role in imperialism was best expressed with President Biden's famous statement: 'If there were no Israel, we'd have to invent it' (*The Conversation* 2023). This article examined the internal dynamics of the Israeli racialising state and presented its external dynamics in terms of its expansion into neighbouring countries and territories, partly for settlements but more importantly to expand and control its resources, especially energy (oil and natural gas). Israel's current genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza is a live example of the state's expansion of the imperialist interests in the area, using policies of physical, social, political, and cultural genocide. At the time of writing, Israel killed close to 40,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and destroyed complete neighbourhoods, refugee camps and cities, hospitals, universities, schools, mosques and churches, many of which were built before the creation of the state of Israel. The current genocide in Gaza is not the result of the October 7 2023 act of resistance by Hamas. Ridding Palestine of its indigenous Palestinians has been the state's design since its very establishment.

In this article I wished to articulate Israel's extreme cruelty, sheer violence, and inhumanity demonstrated in Gaza as a continuous process of the settler colonial state plan of exterminating the Palestinians. As is evident, the state of Israel was neither democratic nor ethical or moral, but it has been and continues to be a rogue state that disregards UN resolutions and international law and is blindly covered up, shielded, and protected by the West, especially the US.

Against Israel's state aggression, the Palestinians have been, since the 1920s, engaged in many forms of resistance. Indeed, resilience,

steadfastness and resistance are moral acts of defiance constituting an integral part of their culture. Literature, poetry, prose, theatre, and cinema of resistance are heavily embedded in Palestinian culture. Palestinian resistance has involved protests, sit-ins and demonstrations throughout the 1920s and 1930s. These developed into the 1936–39 revolt with its six months of general strike. After their expulsion in 1947–9, Palestinians continued the struggle to regain their rights, land, freedom and dignity, until the 1960s with the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its gradual but clear momentum gained since then. Resistance was also enacted by 1948 Palestinians (‘citizens’ of the state), especially through their annual *Yom el-Ard* (Land Day 1976) commemoration. With the oppression, land expropriation, economic strangulation, and social and political repression in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially the West Bank, the Palestinians have been involved in different forms of resistance including armed resistance. The Jenin resistance and its escalation over the last two and half decades is but one example. It is Gaza that seems to have endured the lion’s share of destruction and aggression, through nine wars, the most recent being in 2008–9, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2021 and the genocide begun on October 7 2023, have all resulted in incredibly courageous steadfastness, resilience, and resistance as we are currently witnessing. The Palestinian history is one of pillage, control, robbery and theft of land and resources by the colonial and imperial powers including the Zionist state.

References

- Abdo, N. (1984) ‘The Development of Capitalism in Palestine: The Expropriation of the Palestinian Direct Producers’. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1(4): 88–109.
- (2011) *Women in Israel: Race, Gender and Citizenship* (London: Zed Books).
- (2014) *Captive Revolution: Palestinian Women’s Anti-Colonial Struggle Within the Israeli Prison System* (London: Pluto Press).
- (2017) ‘Ilan Pappé (ed.), *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid: Apartheid Israel and South Africa in Comparative Perspective*’, *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, 16 (1): 125–138.
- Abdo, N. and N. Masalha (eds.) (2018) *An Oral History of the Palestinians* (London: Zed Books).
- Antonius, G. (1939) *The Arab Awakening* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott).
- Arbuthnot, F. (2013) ‘Israel: Gaz, Oil and Trouble in the Levant’, *Dandelion Salad*, 28 December, <https://dandelionsalad.wordpress.com/2013/12/29/israel-gas-oil-and-trouble-in-the-levant-by-felicity-arbuthnot/> (accessed 10 May 2024).
- Arnon-Ohana, Y. (1982) *Fallahinba-mered Ha-aravi be-eretz Yisrael, 1936–39* (The peasants’ revolt in 1936–39 in the land of Israel [sic]) (Tel-Aviv: Pappirus).
- Ben DorBenite, Z. (forthcoming) ‘Proletarianization of the Mizrahim’, in L. Tatour and R. Lentin (eds.) *Race and the Question of Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

- Castello, T. (2020) 'Dripping with Blood And Dirt': How British Capitalism Relied on Slavery', *Socialist Alternative*, 6 August, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/2020/08/06/dripping-with-blood-and-dirt-how-british-capitalism-relied-on-slavery/> (accessed 10 May 2024).
- Chossudovsky, M. (2024) 'Wiping Gaza off the map': Big money agenda. Confiscating Palestine's maritime natural gas reserves', *Global Research*, 23 April, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/israel-gas-oil-and-trouble-in-the-levant/5362955> (accessed 10 May 2024).
- Flapan, S. (1979) *Zionism and the Palestinian*, (New York: Croom Helm).
- Greenwood, P. (2013) 'Ethiopian women in Israel given contraceptive without consent', *The Guardian*, 28 February, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/28/ethiopian-women-given-contraceptives-israel> (accessed 11 May 2024).
- Himadeh, S. (1938) *Economic Organization of Palestine* (Beirut: American University of Beirut).
- Harvey, D. (2010) *A Comparison to Marx's Capital* (New York: Verso).
- Hope-Simpson, J. (1930) 'Palestine: Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the U.K.', <https://usiraq.procon.org/sourcefiles/1939-British-Statement-Policy-Palestine.pdf> (accessed 10 May 2024).
- Jiriyis, S. (1968) *The Arabs in Israel, 1948–1966* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies).
- Kasrils, R. (2015) 'Birds of Feathers: Israel and Apartheid South Africa – colonialism of a special type', in Ilan Pappé (ed.), *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid* (London: Zed Books).
- Khalaf, I. (1991) *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939–1948* (Albany: SUNY Press).
- Lemkin, R. (1944 [2008]) *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Protocols for Redress* (Clerk, NJ.: The Lawbook Exchange Ltd).
- Lentin, R. (2018) *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic).
- Luxemburg, R. (1913 [1951]) *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge).
- Mandel, N. (1976) *Arabs and Zionism before World War* (Berkley, CA: California University Press).
- Marx, K. (1867) *Das Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers).
- Morris, B. (2001) *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Raz, A. (2020) *Looting of Arab Property in the War of Independence* (Haifa: Carmel Publishing).
- Shohat, E. (2002) 'A Reluctant Eulogy: Fragments from the Memories of an Arab-Jew', in N. Abdo and R. Lentin (eds.) *Women and the Politics of Military Confrontation: Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation* (London: Berghahn Books).
- Survey of Palestine vol. I (1991) Beirut: Institute of Palestine Studies, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1649435> (accessed 11 May 2024).

The Conversation (2023), 'Biden says the U.S. would have to invent an Israel if it didn't exist. Why?', 25 July, <https://theconversation.com/biden-says-the-u-s-would-have-to-invent-an-israel-if-it-didnt-exist-why-210172#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20sees%20Israel%20as,d%20have%20to%20invent%20one> (accessed 4 June 2024).

The Washington Post (1996) 'Israel dumps blood from Ethiopians: Official policy to reject donations for fear of AIDS', 26 January, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/01/25/israel-dumps-blood-from-ethiopians/6200327c-dcf4-48ef-9125-379033f388cc/> (accessed 10 May 2024).

United Nation (1948) *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (Geneva: United Nation).

Wolfe, P. (2016) *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso).